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Mostafazadeh et al.

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(54) **LEAD FRAME CHIP SCALE PACKAGE**

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(73) Assignee: **National Semiconductor Corporation**, Santa Clara, CA (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 111 days.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 09/054,422, filed on Apr. 2, 1998, now Pat. No. 6,130,473.

(51) **Int. Cl.**⁷ **H01L 23/495**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **257/666; 257/676; 438/123**

(58) **Field of Search** **257/666, 676, 257/787; 438/111, 123**

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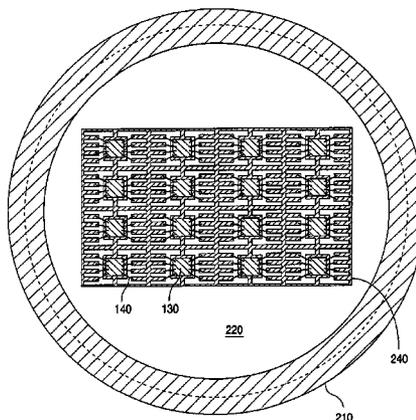
Primary Examiner—S. V. Clark

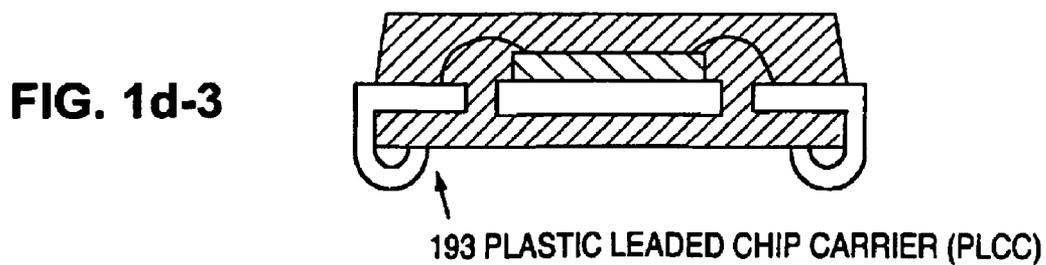
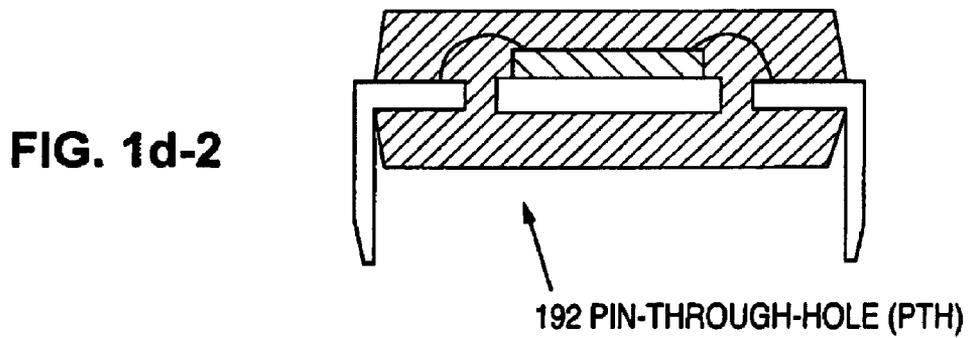
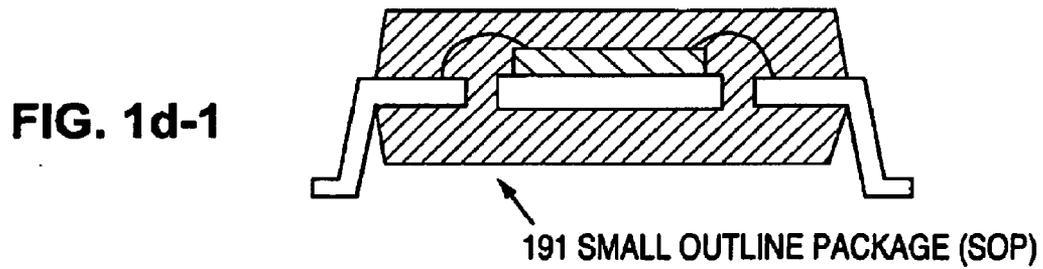
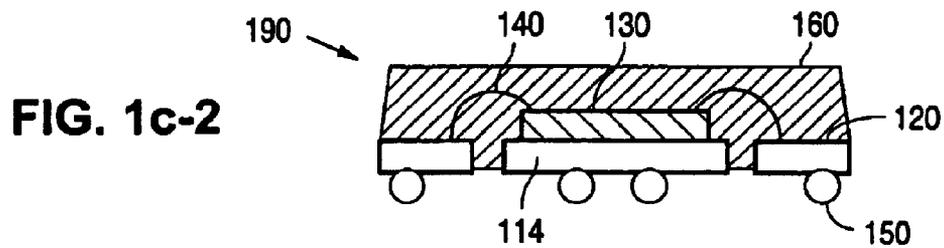
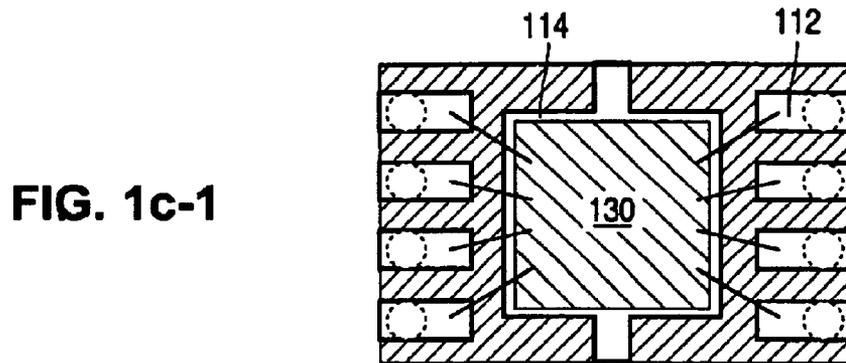
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

In one aspect of the invention, a lead frame panel suitable for use in packaging an array of integrated circuits is described. The lead frame panel includes a matrix of tie bars that extend in substantially perpendicular rows and columns to define a two dimensional array of immediately adjacent device areas separated only by the tie bars. Each device area is suitable for use in an independent integrated circuit package and includes a die attach pad and a plurality of conductive contacts. In another aspect of the invention, a panel assembly suitable for use in simultaneously packaging a multiplicity of integrated circuits is described. The panel assembly includes a lead frame panel formed from a conductive sheet. The lead frame panel is patterned to define at least one two dimensional array of adjacent device areas. Each device area is suitable for use as part of an independent integrated circuit package and including a die and a plurality of contacts positioned around and electrically connected to the die. A molded cap is also provided that substantially uniformly covers a two dimensional array of adjacent device areas while leaving bottom surfaces of the conductive contacts exposed to facilitate electrical connection to external components. The encapsulation material that forms the molded cap is exposed at a bottom surface of the panel of integrated circuits to physically isolate the contacts.

28 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets





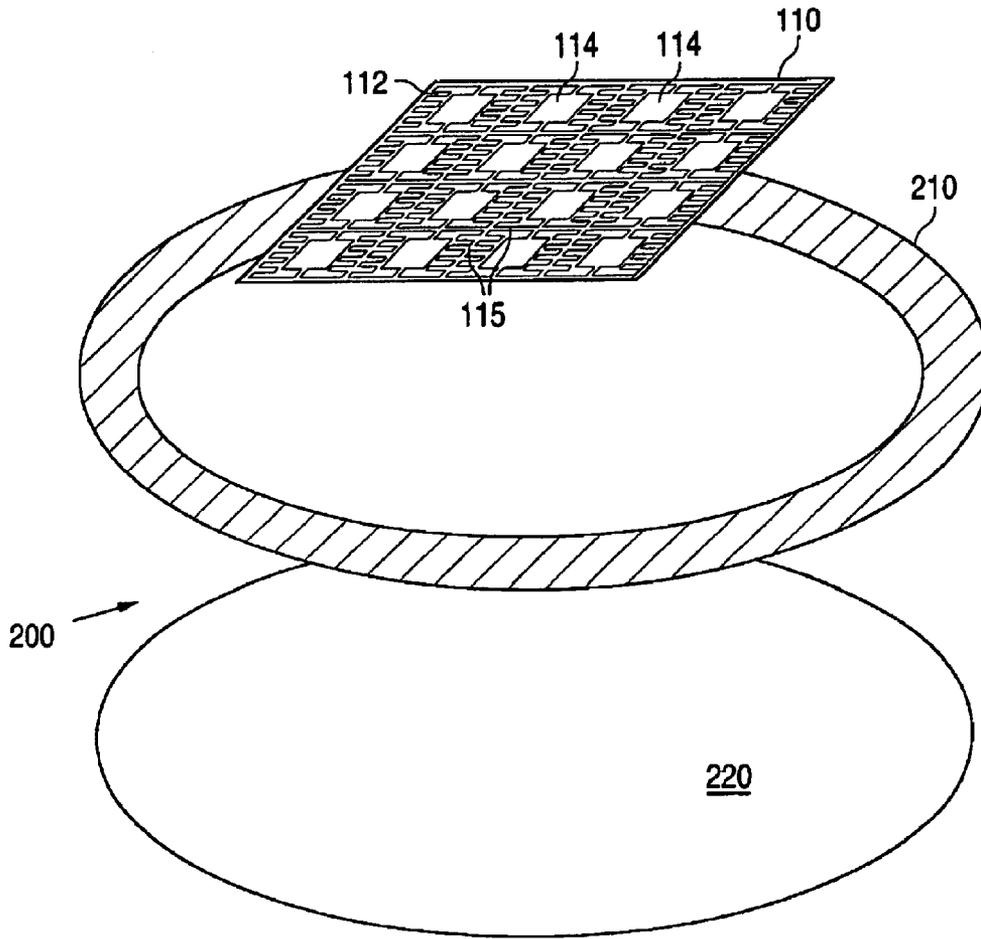


FIG. 2a

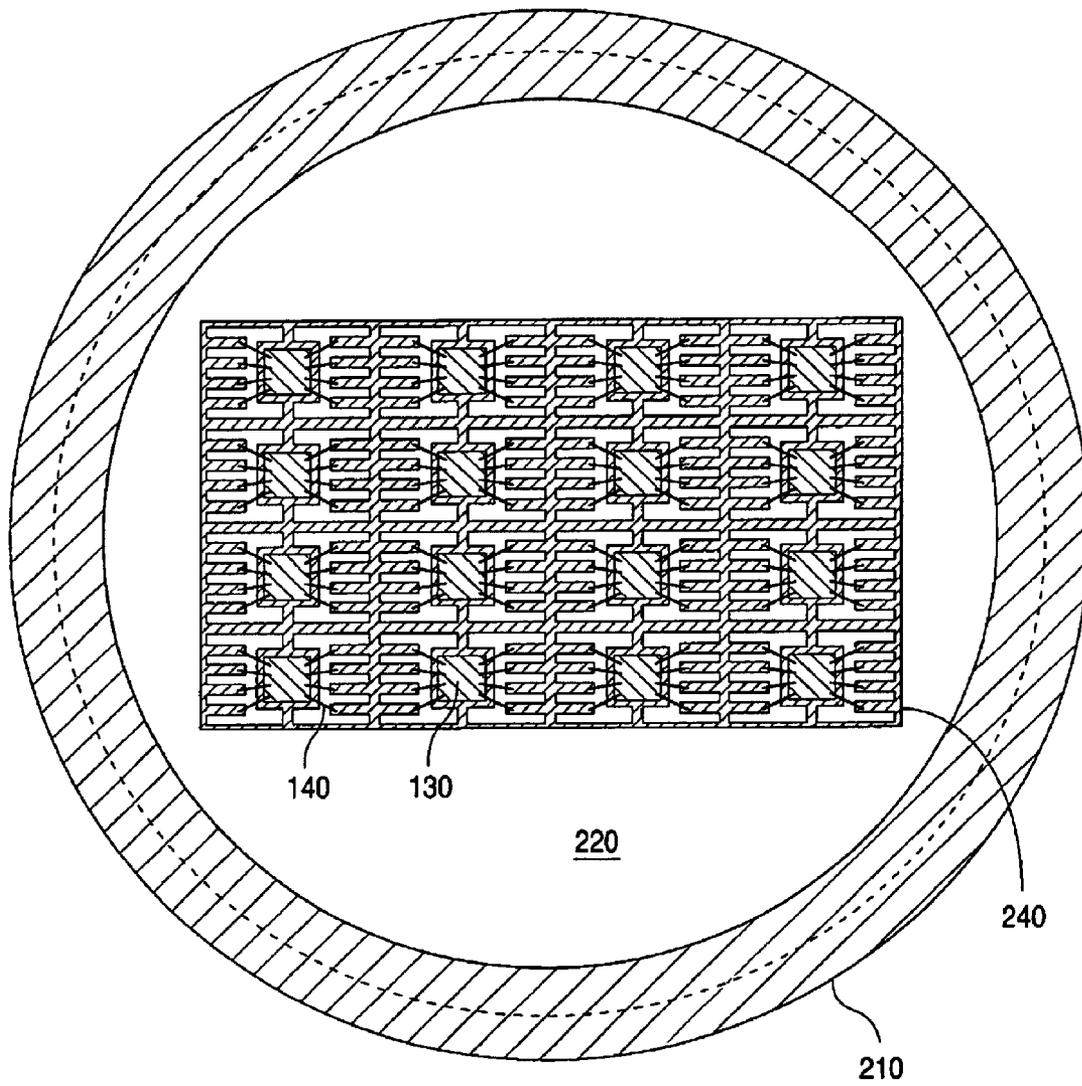


FIG. 2b

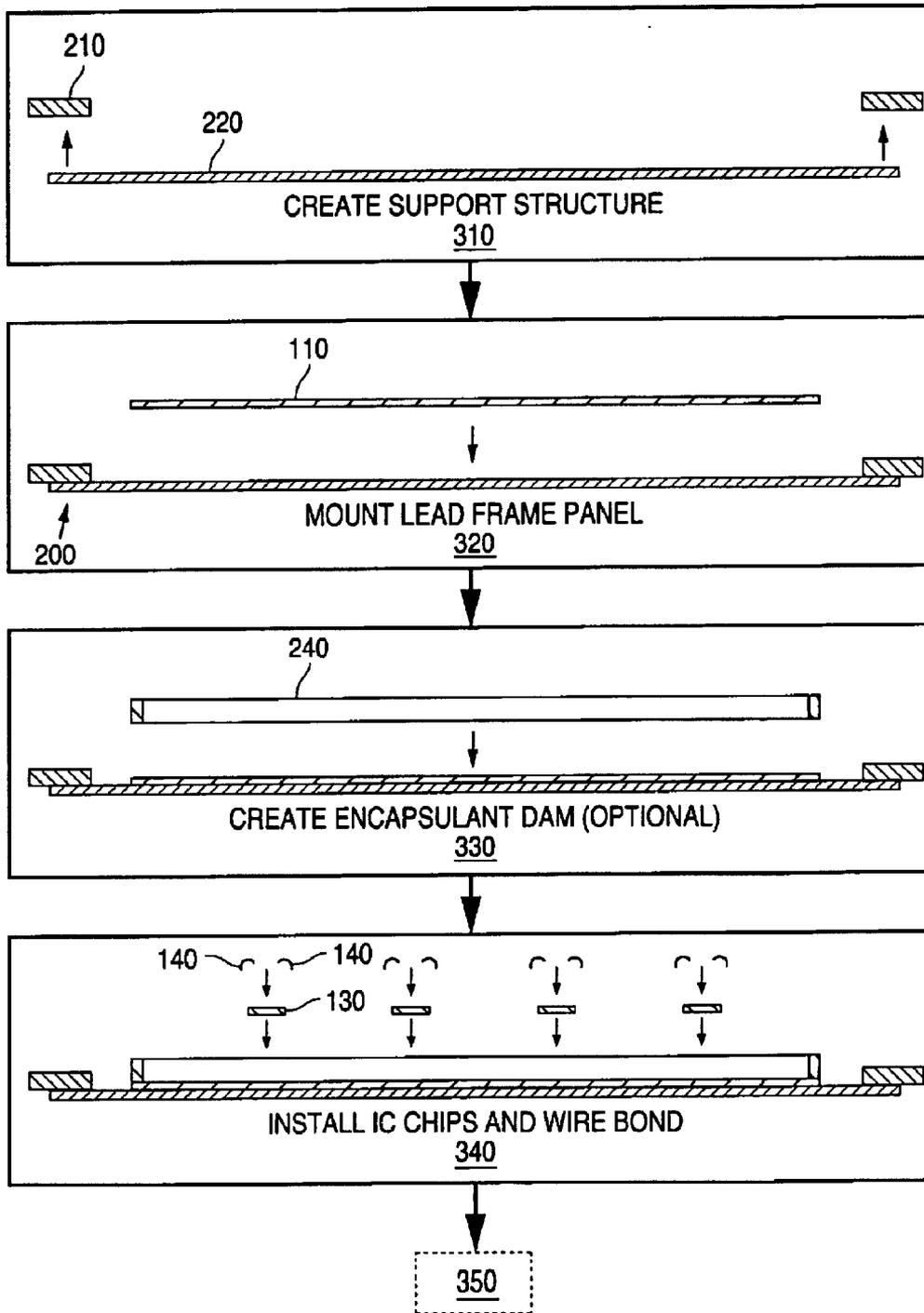


FIG. 3a

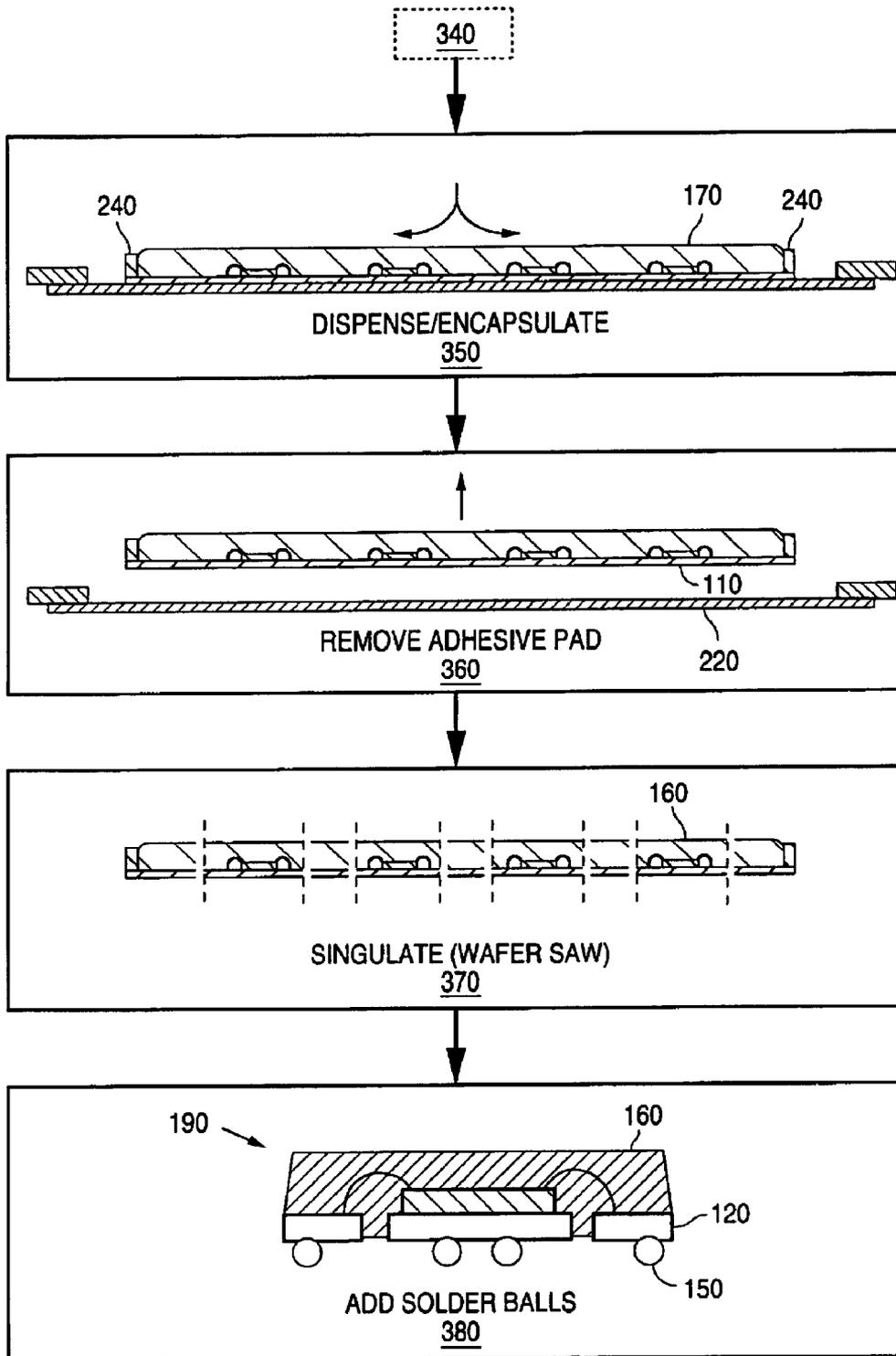


FIG. 3b

LEAD FRAME CHIP SCALE PACKAGE

This application is a division of Ser. No. 09/054,422 Apr. 2, 1998 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,130,476.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to integrated circuit packages, and more specifically, to the production of a chip scale integrated circuit package using a lead frame.

2. Related Art

The use of a lead frame provides an inexpensive means for IC package manufacturing. Etching or stamping a sheet of thin metal to produce the desired lead frame patterns is a well-known manufacturing process, and is conducive to high-volume, low-cost production. In addition, the lead frame panel provides a support framework for the IC chips during IC package assembly. However, as FIGS. 1d-1 through 1d-3 show examples of common IC packages using lead frames. FIG. 1d-1 shows a small outline package (SOP) 191. FIGS. 1d-2 shows a pin-through hole (PTH) package 192. FIGS. 1d-3 shows a plastic leaded chip carrier (PLCC) 193.

As IC chip device densities increase and IC package sizes decrease, the geometries used in the electrical communication paths between the IC chip and the PCB decrease. For example, a chip scale package requires that the protective casing be no more than 20% larger than the IC chip. As a result, the area available for the electrical paths provided by the lead frame is significantly reduced, demanding much finer lead frame patterns. Accordingly, it is desirable to provide an IC packaging method that allows the use of a lead frame in a chip scale package.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method for producing chip scale IC packages using lead frames. A temporary support fixture provides support and stability to a thin lead frame panel having the fine geometries required for high-density IC chip interfaces. An embodiment of the support fixture includes an adhesive pad made of one-sided sticky tape mounted to a rigid frame made of stainless steel, the rigid frame maintaining the adhesive pad in a fixed configuration providing a stable flat surface for support of the lead frame panel. Alternatively, the rigid frame and adhesive pad can be made of any materials compatible with the IC package manufacturing process and capable of supporting the lead frame panel through the manufacturing process. The adhesive pad can also be patterned to ease the manufacturing process. The rigid frame can include positioning features to assist in the alignment of the lead frame and adhesive pad. If encapsulant material is to be dispensed over the lead frame panel, a containment dam can be formed around the lead frame after it is installed on the adhesive pad, to provide a boundary for encapsulant material flow. In one aspect of the invention, a lead frame panel suitable for use in packaging an array of integrated circuits is described. The lead frame panel includes a matrix of tie bars that extend in substantially perpendicular rows and columns to define a two dimensional array of immediately adjacent device areas separated only by the tie bars. Each device area is suitable for use in an independent integrated circuit package and includes a die attach pad and a plurality of conductive contacts.

In another aspect of the invention, a panel assembly suitable for use in simultaneously packaging a multiplicity

of integrated circuits is described. The panel assembly includes a lead frame panel formed from a conductive sheet. The lead frame panel is patterned to define at least one two dimensional array of adjacent device areas. Each device area is suitable for use as part of an independent integrated circuit package and including a die and a plurality of contacts positioned around and electrically connected to the die. A molded cap is also provided that substantially uniformly covers a two dimensional array of adjacent device areas while leaving bottom surfaces of the conductive contacts exposed to facilitate electrical connection to external components. The encapsulation material that forms the molded cap is exposed at a bottom surface of the panel of integrated circuits to physically isolate the contacts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1a shows a representation of a typical lead frame panel in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 1b shows the lead frame panel of FIG. 1a populated with IC chips;

FIGS. 1c-1 and 1c-2 show bottom and cross sectional views of a single leadframe BGA IC package in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 1d-1 through 1d-3 show examples of common IC packages;

FIG. 2a shows an embodiment of a rigid support fixture;

FIG. 2b shows a lead frame panel mounted on an embodiment of a support fixture;

FIGS. 3a and 3b show a flow diagram of a manufacturing process using a temporary support fixture.

Use of the same reference number in different figures indicates similar or like elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Generally, an integrated circuit (IC) package encapsulates an IC chip, or die, in a protective casing and also provides power and signal distribution between the IC chip and an external printed circuit board (PCB). A metal lead frame can be used to provide the electrical paths for that distribution. A lead frame panel suitable for use in accordance with the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 1a. For production purposes, a lead frame panel 110 made up of multiple lead frames 120 is etched or stamped from a thin sheet of metal, as shown in FIG. 1a. An IC chip 130 is then mounted and wire bonded to each lead frame 120, as shown in FIG. 1b. Wire bonding is typically performed using fine gold wires 140. As illustrated in FIG. 1c, each IC chip 130 is then encapsulated in a protective casing 160 which may be formed by dispensing and molding a layer of encapsulant material over all IC chips 130. Next lead frames 120 are cut apart, or singulated to produce individual IC packages 190.

Referring again to FIG. 1a, panel 110 includes a two dimensional array of device areas. Each device area has a plurality of contacts 112 and a die attach pad 114. The panel has a grid of tie bars 115 that extend in perpendicular rows and columns to define the device areas. The tie bars 115 carry the contacts 112 and die attach pads 114.

The embodiment shown in FIG. 2a employs a rigid supporting fixture during the manufacturing process to enable the use of lead frames in chip scale IC packages. An embodiment of a support fixture 200 includes a rigid frame 210 and an adhesive pad 220, as shown in the exploded isometric diagram of FIG. 2a. Because pad 220 is affixed along its border to frame 210, it maintains sufficient tension

to provide a stable supporting surface for a lead frame panel **110**. By making pad **220** out of a thin, flexible, and electrically non-conductive material, it provides a support structure that will not interfere with the conventional manufacturing processes used in IC package assembly. The size of the interior opening of frame **210** is large enough to allow lead frame panel **110** to be fully supported by pad **220**. Multiple IC chips **130** are then installed and wire bonded on lead frame panel **110**, as shown in FIG. **2b**. Subsequent encapsulation of IC chips **130** in protective casings proceeds as in conventional lead frame processing. If a molded protective casing is to be applied, an encapsulant dam **240** can be constructed around the perimeter of lead frame panel **110**. Dam **240** can be made of any substantially rigid substance, including premolded plastic, epoxy, or tape, and serves to prevent flow of encapsulant material beyond the boundaries of lead frame panel **110**. Alternatively, containing measures for encapsulant material could be incorporated into the dispensing mechanism. Once encapsulation is complete, support fixture **200** can be removed, either before or after singulation.

The embodiment of the present invention shown in FIGS. **2a** and **2b** can be constructed from common and readily available materials. Pad **220** can be made from a 3M or Nitto-brand sticky tape used in conventional wafer saw operations. Likewise, a stainless steel ring of the type used in conventional wafer saw operations can be employed for frame **210**. However, both pad **220** and frame **210** can be implemented in many different ways as well. For example, frame **210** can be constructed from any rigid material compatible with the IC package assembly process, such as copper, aluminum, or even non-metals such as ceramic or plastic. Also, while depicted as a thin circular element, frame **210** can also take a variety of configurations depending on handling, interface, and user requirements. For instance, frame **210** can include positioning features to ensure consistent alignment for lead frame panel **110** and adhesive pad **220**. A circular outline for frame **210** provides compatibility with conventional handling requirements for IC production, but is not a required aspect of the present invention.

Similarly, numerous implementations of adhesive pad **220** are possible. Any material compatible with the IC package assembly process and capable of providing the necessary support to the lead frame panel and IC chips can be used. The sticky tape mentioned previously is a convenient choice due to widespread current usage and availability. The use of one-sided sticky tape enables pad **220** to be applied to the bottom surface of frame **210** and provide an adhesive surface for mounting of lead frame panel **110**, without requiring additional attachment materials or components. Pad **220** can also be patterned by removing selected portions in order to facilitate subsequent assembly operations such as electrical interconnection formation. Removal of pad **220** once packaging is complete can be performed in various ways, depending on the nature of the adhesive material used. A light adhesive material may allow pad **220** to simply be peeled away from frame **110**. An alternative bonding agent requires exposure to UV light before removal of pad **220** can take place.

FIGS. **3a** and **3b** show a graphical flow chart illustrating a method for manufacturing a lead frame BGA package using an embodiment of the present invention. The manufacturing process is described in conjunction with the elements described in FIGS. **2a-2c**. In a step **310** in FIG. **3a**, adhesive pad **220** is applied to rigid frame **210** to create support fixture **200**. Lead frame panel **110** is then mounted on pad **220** in a step **320**. An optional step **330** allows

encapsulant dam **240** to be applied around the border of lead frame panel **110** if subsequent encapsulant material dispensing is to be performed. Next, an IC chip **130** is mounted and wire bonded onto each of the lead frames **120** of lead frame panel **110**. Continuing the process in FIG. **3b**, a step **350** involves dispensing a portion of encapsulant material **170** into the area defined by dam **240** to cover IC chips **130**, and then curing material **170** to a desired hardness. In a step **360**, pad **220** is removed from lead frame panel **110**. Next, in a step **370**, a wafer saw operation is performed to singulate lead frame panel **110** into individual IC packages. The singulation process converts the layer of hardened encapsulant material **170** into individual protective casings **160**. Finally, in a step **380**, solder balls **150** are applied to desired electrical interconnection locations to complete lead frame BGA IC package **190**.

In this manner a lead frame BGA IC package can be produced using a temporary support structure. This enables the production of IC packages using lead frames that would otherwise be too fragile to withstand conventional manufacturing processes. It should be noted that while particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many modifications and variations thereto are possible, all of which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. For example, the wafer saw operation of step **370** can be performed prior to removal of support fixture **200** from lead frame panel **110**. Also, solder balls **150** could be applied to lead frames **120** in step **370** prior to singulation. Alternatively, appropriately located openings in adhesive pad **220** would allow solder balls **150** to be applied without removing pad **220**. Certain lead frame designs may even allow patterning of pad **220** such that removal is unnecessary. Finally, while the present invention has been described with reference to chip scale IC package manufacturing, it can be applied to any IC package manufacturing, process involving lead frames, including non-chip scale and non-BGA IC packages such as SOP's, PLCC's, and PTH packages.

What is claimed is:

1. A panel suitable for forming a multiplicity of integrated circuit packages, each integrated circuit package being arranged for accommodating an associated semiconductor die, the panel comprising a lead frame panel having a two dimensional matrix array of device areas, each device area being suitable for forming an independent integrated circuit package and comprising:

a planar lead frame comprising (a) a die attach pad supporting said semiconductor die on an upper surface of said die attach pad, and (b) substantially planar conductive leads positioned around an outer periphery of said die attach pad, wherein each of said conductive leads has a lower surface that is substantially coplanar with said lower surface of said die attach pad, said upper and lower surfaces of said die attach pad being located on opposite sides of said die attach pad;

a plurality of bond wires each coupling one of said conductive leads to a corresponding bonding pad on said semiconductor die; and

a plastic encapsulation enclosing said semiconductor die, said bond wires and said lead frame, exposing at a lower surface of said plastic encapsulation said lower surface of said die attach pad and said lower surfaces of said conductive leads, wherein the plastic encapsulation is part of a molded cap that covers the two dimensional matrix array of the device areas.

2. An integrated circuit package as in claim **1**, further comprising a solder ball attached to each of said exposed lower surface of said conductive leads.

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3. An integrated circuit package for accommodating a semiconductor die, comprising:

a planar lead frame comprising (a) a die attach pad supporting said semiconductor die on an upper surface of said die attach pad, and (b) substantially planar conductive leads positioned around an outer periphery of said die attach pad, wherein each of said conductive leads has a lower surface that is substantially coplanar with said lower surface of said die attach pad, said upper and lower surfaces of said die attach pad being located on opposite sides of said die attach pad;

a plurality of bond wires each coupling one of said conductive leads to a corresponding bonding pad on said semiconductor die; and

a plastic encapsulation enclosing said semiconductor die, said bond wires and said lead frame, exposing at a lower surface of said plastic encapsulation said lower surface of said die attach pad and said lower surfaces of said conductive leads; and

an adhesive pad removably attached to said integrated circuit package, covering said lower surface of said die attach pad and said lower surfaces of said conductive leads, and

wherein said integrated circuit package is one of a plurality of integrated circuit packages fabricated simultaneously on a lead frame panel that includes said lead frame, said lead frame panel comprising a two dimensional matrix array of device areas wherein each device area includes a die attach pads and conductive leads that are positioned under the plastic encapsulation, and wherein said adhesive pad supports the array of die attach pads and conductive leads prior to singulation of the plurality of integrated circuit packages.

4. An integrated circuit package as in claim 3, wherein said lead frame is fabricated on a metal panel.

5. An integrated circuit package as in claim 3, wherein said array of die attach pads and conductive dies is being arranged in a regular pattern so as to allow singulation of said integrated circuit packages by sawing through said plastic encapsulation and said conductive leads at predetermined positions.

6. A lead frame panel suitable for use in packaging an array of integrated circuits, the lead frame panel being formed from a conductive sheet and having top and bottom surfaces, the lead frame panel comprising:

a matrix of tie bars that extend in substantially perpendicular rows and columns to define a two dimensional array of immediately adjacent device areas separated only by the tie bars, each device area being suitable for use in an independent integrated circuit package;

a multiplicity of die attach pads; and

a multiplicity of conductive contacts, the conductive contacts being mechanically carried by the tie bars; and wherein each device area in the two dimensional array of immediately adjacent device areas includes one of the die attach pads and a plurality of the conductive contacts that are positioned generally adjacent the die attach pad.

7. A lead frame panel as recited in claim 6 wherein at least one of the top and bottom surfaces of the die attach pads, the conductive contacts and the tie bars are all substantially co-planar.

8. A lead frame panel as recited in claim 7 wherein the conductive contacts and the die attach pads are substantially the same thickness.

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9. A lead frame panel as recited in claim 6 further comprising an adhesive tape adhered to a bottom surface of the lead frame panel.

10. A panel assembly of integrated circuits comprising:

a lead frame panel as recited in claim 6,

a plurality of dice, each die being carried by an associated die attach pad; and a molded cap that covers the array of device areas while leaving bottom surfaces of the die attach pads and the conductive contacts exposed, wherein encapsulation material that forms the molded cap is exposed at a bottom surface of the panel assembly.

11. A packaged integrated circuit formed by singulating the panel assembly recited in claim 10, wherein the conductive contacts in the packaged integrated circuit do not extend beyond the edge of the encapsulation material in the packaged integrated circuit and the die attach pad in the packaged integrated circuit is exposed.

12. A packaged integrated circuit as recited in claim 11 wherein the conductive contacts and the die attach pad are substantially the same thickness.

13. A panel assembly as recited in claim 10 further comprising an adhesive tape adhered to a bottom surface of the lead frame panel, whereby the adhesive tape serves to keep the exposed surface of the exposed encapsulation material substantially co-planar with the bottom surfaces of the contacts and die attach pads.

14. A panel assembly suitable for use in packaging a multiplicity of integrated circuits simultaneously, the panel assembly having top and bottom surfaces and comprising:

a lead frame panel formed from a conductive sheet, the lead frame panel being patterned to define at least one two dimensional array of adjacent device areas, each device area being suitable for use as part of an independent integrated circuit package and including a die and a plurality of contacts positioned around and electrically connected to the die; and

a molded cap that substantially uniformly covers the two dimensional array of adjacent device areas while leaving bottom surfaces of the conductive contacts exposed to facilitate electrical connection to external components, wherein encapsulation material that forms the molded cap is exposed at a bottom surface of the panel of integrated circuits to physically isolate the contacts.

15. A panel assembly as recited in claim 14 wherein: each device area in the lead frame panel further includes a die attach pad; and

bottom surfaces of the die attach pads are also exposed.

16. A panel assembly as recited in claim 15 wherein the die attach pads and the conductive contacts each have upper and lower surfaces that substantially co-planar.

17. A panel assembly as recited in claim 16 wherein the conductive contacts and the die attach pads are substantially the same thickness.

18. A panel assembly as recited in claim 14 further comprising an adhesive tape adhered to a bottom surface of the lead frame panel, whereby the adhesive tape serves to keep the encapsulation material exposed at the bottom of the panel assembly substantially co-planar with the bottom surfaces of the contacts and die attach pads.

19. A panel assembly as recited in claim 14 further comprising bonding wires for electrically coupling the dice to their associated contacts, wherein the molded cap encapsulates the bonding wires.

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20. A packaged integrated circuit formed by singulating the panel assembly recited in claim 14, wherein the conductive contacts in the packaged integrated circuit do not extend beyond the edge of the encapsulation material that is part of the packaged integrated circuit.

21. A packaged integrated circuit as recited in claim 20 wherein the integrated circuit is singulated by sawing the panel assembly along substantially perpendicular lines.

22. A panel assembly suitable for use in packaging a multiplicity of integrated circuits, the panel assembly having top and bottom surfaces and comprising:

a lead frame panel formed from a conductive sheet, the lead frame panel being patterned to define at least one two dimensional array of adjacent device areas, each device area being suitable for use as part of an independent integrated circuit package and including a plurality of contacts;

a plurality of dice, each die being associated with one of the device areas and being electrically connected to the associated contacts; and

a molded cap that covers the two dimensional array of adjacent device areas while leaving bottom surfaces of the contacts exposed to facilitate electrical connection to external components, wherein encapsulation material that forms the molded cap is exposed at a bottom surface of the panel of integrated circuits to physically isolate the contacts; and

an adhesive pad adhered to a bottom surface of the lead frame panel, whereby the adhesive pad serves to keep

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the encapsulation material exposed at the bottom of the panel assembly substantially co-planar with the bottom surfaces of the contacts and die attach pads.

23. A panel assembly as recited in claim 22 wherein: each device area in the lead frame panel further includes a die attach pad; and

bottom surfaces of the die attach pads are also exposed.

24. A panel assembly as recited in claim 23 wherein the lead frame panel further comprises tie bars that support the contact, wherein the device areas are substantially immediately adjacent one another with only the tie bars residing therebetween.

25. A panel assembly as recited in claim 24 wherein at least one of top and bottom surfaces of the die attach pads, the contacts and tie bars are substantially co-planar.

26. A panel assembly as recited in 23 wherein the conductive contacts and the die attach pads are substantially the same thickness.

27. A panel assembly as recited in claim 22, further comprising bonding wires for electrically coupling the dice to their associated contacts, wherein the molded cap encapsulates the bonding wires.

28. A packaged integrated circuit formed by singulating the panel assembly recited in claim 22, wherein the contacts in the packaged integrated circuit do not extend beyond the edge of the encapsulation material that is part of the packaged integrated circuit.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,888,228 B1
DATED : May 3, 2005
INVENTOR(S) : Mostafazadeh et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 1,

Line 19, delete "However, as".

Lines 38-56, delete "A temporary support fixture provides support and stability to a thin lead frame panel having the fine geometries required for high-density IC chip interfaces. An embodiment of the support fixture includes an adhesive pad made of one-sided sticky tape mounted to a rigid frame made of stainless steel, the rigid frame maintaining the adhesive pad in a fixed configuration providing a stable flat surface for support of the lead frame panel. Alternatively, the rigid frame and adhesive pad can be made of any materials compatible with the IC package manufacturing process and capable of supporting the lead frame panel through the manufacturing process. The adhesive pad can also be patterned to ease the manufacturing process. The rigid frame can include positioning features to assist in the alignment of the lead frame and adhesive pad. If encapsulant material is to be dispensed over the lead frame panel, a containment dam can be formed around the lead frame after it is installed on the adhesive pad, to provide a boundary for encapsulant material flow".

Column 2,

Line 17, delete "typical".

Line 18, change "ne embodiment" to -- one embodiment --.

Column 3,

Line 49, change "panel 10" to -- panel 110 --.

Column 6,

Line 30, change "multiplicity ay of" to -- multiplicity of --.

Line 54, change "that substantially" to -- that are substantially --.

Signed and Sealed this

Twenty-sixth Day of July, 2005



JON W. DUDAS

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office